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ABSTRACT

The basic problem of communicating in Arabic today is the existence of two language varieties, one spoken and one written. These may even be considered two distinct languages. They have existed side by side for as long as one knows. Classical written Arabic became fossilized and developed as a closed system independent of common usage and linguistic change. Written Arabic is the only variety in which education can be acquired in any Arab country, and has become a sign of elitism. Even so, it is not considered a valid source of grammatical rules. Spoken and written Arabic now compete in every respect. The process of Arabicization has been undertaken in many Arab countries, particularly in higher education, but it usually refers to the widespread use of Arabic to the exclusion of some other language, such as English. A better solution would be Arabicization, a conscious effort at linguistic change (Arabicization) in the overall context of social change. It would be desirable for all Arab countries to adopt a comprehensive language policy addressing such issues as adaptation of written Arabic norms to contemporary usage, universal literacy in Arabic in the Arab region by the year 2000, standardization of written Arabic, and full Arabicization at all educational levels within 10 years. (MSE)

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Communicating in Arabic: Problems and Prospects[1]

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Summary

In this paper I discuss two major problem areas of communicating in Arabic today and one of their corollaries. The two major problems are diglossia and the Arabicization of higher education, and the corollary is the problem of scientific and technical terminology in Arabic. I shall make no mention of what others see as problems, and what I consider to be pseudo-problems, such as the claimed difficulties of the spelling system or the grammar (cf. Ibrahim 1983, 512-513). To me, these are pseudo-problems because they are in some ways consequences of the two major problems discussed in this paper, and because these pseudo-problems are often used, consciously or unconsciously, to dodge critical issues or sweep them under the carpet.

Arabic Diglossia

The basic problem of communicating in Arabic today, which is by no means a recent phenomenon, lies in the existence of two language varieties, one spoken and one written. It is even questionable whether vernacular spoken Arabic and written Arabic may be called varieties of the same language rather than different languages. In a publication sponsored and published by one of the Arab League organizations, Maʿmouri et al.

(1983, 12-13) argue that the widespread belief in the oneness of Arabic throughout the Arab region is a sign of the lack of an objective linguistic awareness in the Arab countries. They add that objectively and scientifically speaking, it must be concluded that standard and spoken Arabic are two separate language systems.

The two varieties/languages have existed side by side for as long as we know. A widely held view among educated Arabs is that what is today written Arabic was once the mother tongue of the Arab tribes in Arabia and that it remained so until the first period of the Arab conquests (seventh and eighth centuries A.D.). These conquests took the Arabs to strange lands and brought them in contact with various non-Arabic speaking peoples. The consequence of all this to language was the rise of the spoken dialects and the beginning of a long history of linguistic normativism in written Arabic manifested in the production of a vast number of grammars, dictionaries, collections of texts, and other language books.

However, there is increasing evidence that written or classical Arabic was never the native language of any particular tribe or group of Arabs, but that it arose as a common literary and commercial language of inter-tribal communication in pre-Islamic Arabia (Bateson 1967, 76), i.e., as a koine which made communication possible among the numerous Arab tribes scattered over a wide area (cf. Duri 1983, 1). Thus, at least "as far back as the late sixth century Classical Arabic was, apparently, a super-tribal language, absorbing lexical and at this time presumably also phonetic, morphological, and syntactic features of various tribal dialects" (Blau 1962, 2). The position of this super-tribal Arabic koine was enhanced when, in addition to its literary and business functions, it acquired a religious function with the rise of Islam and the

revelation of the Qur'an in the koine. This religious function has always been the most powerful factor in the preservation of written Arabic. The codification of the language, which culminated in the eighth century A.D. in Sibawaihi's grammar, the first extant grammar of Arabic, was initiated with the specific aim of preserving the Qur'anic text from corruption after millions of non-Arab muslims had converted to Islam and needed to read and understand the Qur'an and other religious tests.

The codification of what came to be called classical Arabic in this manner was an act of language fossilization. This was inescapable since Arabic grammar was written and continued to develop as a closed system independently of living usage and continuous linguistic change. The texts which were used as a basis for codification were foreign to the age and the individuals who codified them. Modest attempts at codification were apparently made in the seventh century. But the first serious attempts began only at the beginning of the eighth century A.D. By the end of the eighth and the beginning of the ninth centuries, Arabic grammar, along with a number of other language and religious sciences, had been firmly established. The texts used as a basis in all of this activity were (a) pre-Islamic peotry, which spans a century, from the early sixth to the rise of Islam in the first decade of the seventh century, and (b) the Qur'an revealed in the first half of the seventh century. Thus, the earliest grammarians were separated from the texts they codified by a period of 150-250 years. The length of the period separating the grammarians from their texts would not be that significant were it not for the fact that it was also a period of many upheavals in the lives of Arabic speakers brought about by conquest and its many linguistic, cultural, social, and other consequences. These factors served only to widen the already existing gap between spoken and written Arabic and

prompted the rise of Arabic grammar and normativisim with regard to the codified variety of Arabic. Thus, the grammarians came to codify a language which did not even belong to their age for the purpose of preventing any changes in the language of their chosen texts. It is in this sense that their work was an act of language fossilization (cf. Haas 1982b, 24-25).

Moreover, grammatical progress itself was checked and no significant advances were made beyond the eighth century. There is general agreement among historians of Arabic grammar that, after the eighth century, the development of Arabic grammar "continued in the direction mapped out by Sibawaihi. The number and quality of facts that could be cited were limited. The colloquial language, the dialects, the literature of the day were all excluded from consideration" (Glazer 1974, xli). Language fossilization thus bred grammatical fossilization.

Other workers in the field of language, such as lexicographers, adopted the same philosophy and followed a similar policy. In this way, the old Arabic grammars, lexicons, and other language sources, which are still the basis of all language and grammar books produced and used in the Arab countries today, recognize as legitimate and correct only that variety of Arabic which was codified by the grammarians and recorded by the lexicographers. Naturally, at the same time, the spoken language has continued to change and to remove itself further and further from the written language.

Written Arabic today is the only variety of Arabic through which education of any sort may be acquired anywhere in the Arab countries. Since this variety is not acquired as a native language by any speaker of Arabic, it has to be acquired through formal instruction. When two

language varieties, one of which is highly stable, exist side by side for such a long period of time, it is easy to imagine some of the consequences and problems inherent in such a situation. The gap between the varieties can only grow wider and become more and more unbridgeable, especially in view of the fact that education and the consequent access to written Arabic were, until quite recently, the privilege of only a tiny minority. In this way competence in written Arabic has come to be a sure mark of scholarship and elitism (cf. De Silva on Sinhalese 1982, 99). Even today, with thousands of schools and scores of universities throughout the Arab countries, it is still the case that one of the highest compliments one can pay to an Arab is to praise the quality of his/her Arabic (i.e., the written variety). The fact that successful acquisition remains extremely limited, in spite of the tremendous time and effort spent on teaching this institutionalized form of the language, illustrates better than anything else the crisis of written Arabic. Standard written Arabic today is still the monopoly of a very small minority of educated Arabs. This state of affairs has not been achieved through any particular design, but through the total failure of all Arab educational systems, which have failed, individually and collectively, in making standard Arabic the common language of all social classes for all purposes and needs. One manifestation of this colossal failure is that most Arab university professors and graduates seem to be unable to comply with the rules and norms of literary Arabic. In fact, I very much suspect that the insecurity and anxiety caused by some Arab university professors' insufficient knowledge of and inadequate proficiency in standard Arabic must be one of the major reasons for these professors' opposition to the Arabicization of education in Arab universities.

To recapitulate thusfar, the problem of diglossia is compounded and intensified by the fact that even modern written Arabic (also called MSA, Modern Standard Arabic) is not considered a valid source of grammatical rules. The thousands of new lexical items which have entered the language in the last hundred years are not recorded in our dictionaries. The grammar books teach a lot which long ago ceased to be of any relevance to standard Arabic as it is practiced today. There does not exist yet any Arabic dictionary or grammar book derived from or based on an actual corpus of modern Arabic texts. In other words, the standard language has been developing rapidly, but the tools and means which should make it easily accessible to the masses have remained almost without change for the last twelve centuries.

In view of this situation, it is not surprising to find spoken Arabic competing with standard Arabic in every respect. The spoken language affects standard Arabic in the area which is dearest to the purists and which is least useful in communication, namely, inflectional morphology. Thus, instead of acquiring a new language system, which is that of standard Arabic, the Arab school child modifies the target system in such a way as to approximate that of his/her spoken language. The standard language has little relevance to his life and its existence is scarcely felt since it is confined to the school books. Even teachers of Arabic use the local variety in most of their teaching. The local variety also rules supreme at home, among peers and playmates, in the school, and on radio and television the programs of which are mostly in non-standard Arabic. And what little MSA the child is exposed to through the mass media, children's books and modern literature deviates in many ways from the rules of standard written Arabic and, not infrequently, even clashes with those rules. Because the rules of Arabic grammar are

based on prescriptive rules instead of actual usage, they will remain hopeless and unattainable goals for the vast majority of Arab learners.

The failure to teach and learn Arabic adequately is a constant topic of debate and discussion in Arab educational and academic circles and in the Arab press and other mass media. The fact that the language question is discussed so frequently on such a massive level is another sure sign of the existence of an acute problem.

Mistakes in the use of standard Arabic (i.e., deviations from the prescribed norms) abound on all levels and in various media: in the language heard on radio and television, in formal speeches and oral renditions of scripted texts, in newspapers and magazines, in official documents and publications, in notices and signs, and in all sorts of books published in all Arab countries, including works of creative literature.[2] I have argued elsewhere that the only plausible explanation of this state of affairs lies in the linguisitic distance which seperates the formally learned standard written Arabic from the spoken and natively acquired varieties of Arabic (Ibrahim 1983, 510-513).

The situation just described has also a positive aspect to it. It is a situation fraught with indications and unmistakable signs that a "new language" is in the making. It is, or rather will be, a language which is anathema to the purists since it violates a great many of the traditional rules, but it is/will be a much more realistic language born out of the interplay between spoken and written Arabic. The new language will no doubt become a supraregional standard "in touch with varieties of the living, orally developed and developing language," and "not artificial, unintelligible or unusable by all save the initiated few" (Mitchell, 1956).

There seems to be general agreement that the most powerful factor in the development of this new language variety is "the increasing contact of Classical Arabic and the local dialects" (Palva 1969, 3) brought about by mass education and "the unparalleled intensity of modern communication" (Haas 1982b, 14) which has been made possible by the mass media (Palva 1982, 17; Moussa 1955, 42-43; Ṣayyādī 1982, 40; etc.). The emerging language variety of Arabic, which will probably develop into a new "supra koine" (Haas 1982b, 29), cannot be characterized with enough precision at this stage of its development. However, some general trends already at work may be discerned. It is clear that hybridization at both ends of the diglossia scale has taken and is still taking place, although it is impossible to measure the contribution of each variety to this hybrid with any degree of precision. Hybridization at the lower end of the scale is usually called 'classicization', as opposed to 'colloquialization' at the higher end (Palva 1982, 15). In addition to classicization and colloquialization, a third tendency is at work, namely, koineization or dialect levelling, "a development that eliminates specific isoglosses and thus melts down local dialects into greater linguistic units" (ibid, 16). Taken together, these three processes will undoubtedly result in greater linguistic unification of the Arab countries. It is doubtful whether diglossia in its classical formulation will disappear from the Arabic-speaking communities, but the gap will be greatly reduced thanks to the development of a hybrid or intermediate variety. On the basis of my own observations of spoken and written Arabic, and on the basis of my experience and knowledge of the use of Arabic at Arab universities and other private and public institutions, this 'intermediate' variety will have the following general characteristics, once it has developed fully:

1. The phonology and syntax of the new common variety will be primarily those of standard Arabic (cf. Chaieb 1976, 50-55).

2. In morphology, especially grammatical inflections, the new common variety will be fundamentally that of spoken Arabic (cf. Al-Sayyid 1980, 289-290).

3. The vocabulary will be mixed. Although thousands of classical roots will be preserved and continue to be used, a generous admixture of items from the spoken dialects as well as thousands of new terms will be added to the lexicon of the new variety (cf. Valdman 1968, 323 for similar developments in Haitian Creole, and De Silva 1982, 98; 108 on Sinhalese).

In this way the spoken and written language varieties will come colser to each other, and the extreme variation-cum-polarization which characterizes the language use of educated Arabs will disappear. Naturally, variation will continue to exist, but, the polarization of functions characteristic of the polarized language varieties will disappear from educated general use. There will be a small group of diehards and purists left who will continue to preach and perhaps use classical Arabic, but their influence will be as limited and inconsequential as that of the Catholic church on the preservation of Latin.

Significantly enough, a contemporary Arab historian recognizes this "intermediate" and "common" Arabic language as a distinguishing feature of the Arab nation. He goes on to define this "intermediate common language" as that which is read and understood instantly by any Arab reader in any part of the Arab region, regardless of social class or educational level. Furthermore, it is the language in which modern Arabic books, newspapers, and magazines are written; and it is the language of Arab theatre, television, cinema, and radio throughout the

Arab countries. It is a language which has developed and is still developing in the course of the struggle between "the language of the lexicons" and the spoken dialects (ʿAmāra 1981, 101).

Brief mention in this section should be made of a "theory" on the interplay between classical and colloquial Arabic put forward by the Tunisian scholar and cabinet minister, Al-Bashīr bin Salāma, who maintains that each and every Arab poet or prose writer who made an original contribution to Arabic literature did so by consciously grafting the rhythms of his spoken dialect onto his poetry or prose (Bin Salāma 1984, 11; 94). Unfortunately, the writer does not elaborate on this basic claim, but the theory is interesting for us here since it attributes all originality in classical Arabic to its interaction with spoken Arabic.

The developments which are currently taking place in standard Arabic can be viewed positively since they will result in bringing the spoken and written varieties closer to each other, thereby making the learning and acquisition of the written form easily accessible to a much larger segment of the Arab population than is the case at present. There is one inherent danger in this situation, however, which can result in the fragmentation of written Arabic into a number of unintelligible varieties. Because of present Arab disunity and poor communication channels among Arab countries, written Arabic seems to be developing and changing in each Arab country independently of the other countries. This is particularly noticeable in the introduction of new vocabulary items and the translation of foreign expressions and idioms, most of which are taken from English and French. Even school books contain a fair number of local or regional words which would not be understandable in other Arab counties or regions. The situation is especially serious in newspaper language which sometimes

employs such a large number of local and regional words in their local news stories and advertisements as to make these incomprehensible to Arab readers from other areas (cf. Ibrahim 1986; see also below on variation in technical terminology). If the present trend continues, more and more regional and local words will enter the written Arabic of various Arab regions which, in addition to other aspects of variation, will lead to less uniformity and more variety in the developing standard Arabic.

Arabicization of Higher Education

If diglossia and its concomitant problems in Arabic have been the result of largely historical developments over which individuals have little or no control, the exclusion of Arabic from most Arab universities as a medium of instruction in scientific and technological fields has been essentially a matter of choice. This situation makes the language problem in higher education three-dimensional, with spoken Arabic, written Arabic, and the foreign language (English or French) each representing one dimension of the problem.

The major arguments which are usually put forward by those who are opposed to Arabicization may be summarized as follows:

1. Arabic is not yet sufficiently developed to be the language of science and technology, mainly because it lacks the required scientific terminology.

2. Scientific and technological publications in Arabic are very few and inadequate.

3. A language of wider communication, such as English or French, used as a medium of instruction, will help our scholars in maintaining international scholarly ties and world-wide intellectual contacts.

The first and second arguments are in fact a judgement on the language users rather than on the language itself. A language can only be as developed or underdeveloped as its speakers. In this connection, it is safe to generalize by saying that there cannot exist a modern or developed language apart from a modern or developed society. The opposite must also be true: a modern and developed society is not possible without a modern and developed language. Since all Arab countries belong to the category of developing (actually, underdeveloped) countries, Arabic must necessarily be a developing or underdeveloped language. Time alone is no cure for underdevelopment, whether linguistic or otherwise. A language can be modernized only through utilization. As long as Arabic remains underutilized as a language of science it will continue to be hard to write on scientific topics in Arabic, because a less used language will have more gaps in concepts and terminology than a used one:

> Assez souvent, on met en évidence le degré insuffisant de modernisation des langues des pays en développement, c.-à-d. l'absence de terminologie scientifique, la quantité et la qualité limitées du discours scientifique. C'est oublier que ce qui importe, ce n'est pas la disponibilité immédiate et préalable des termes scientifiques et techniques mais l'utilisation de la langue pour créer, transmettre, "faire" la science et la technologie qui engendre le discours scientifique et technique qui modernise la langue.
> (Zachariev 1981, 170)

This was the course of action which the Japanese followed and which resulted in changing the status of Japanese from a pre-modern language into a modern one. Thus, since the Meiji era and during a period of less than

a century, nearly every relevant book from any language was translated into Japanese. "After World War II alone, more than 150,000 books were translated into Japanese" (Alisjahbana 1984, 50).

The third argument used by the opponents of Arabicization is hardly relevant for the great majority of Arab university students since the number of graduates who become scholars with international ties is extremely small. This means that the interests of the majority are being sacrificed for the sake of a tiny minority. The use of a foreign language as a medium of instruction is, to a certain extent, like the use of classical Arabic to the exclusion of other varieties, in that both are the product of an elitist mentality. Apart from elitism, this situation is also very odd for two reasons. The first one is because students come to the university poorly prepared for studying in a foreign language since Arabic is the only medium of instruction in all pre-university years.[3] The second reason is related to the linguistic practice of the vast majority of Arab university graduates in their post-university years. Arabic is virtually the only language they will need and/or use after graduation. Those who are science or mathematics teachers will have to instruct their students in Arabic, and those who are physicians, pharmacists, dentists, engineers, architects, or specialists in agriculture must revert to Arabic in their respective professions since they deal with Arabic-speaking individuals all the time. But perhaps the most serious consequence of using a foreign language as a medium of instruction is the alienation of an important and sizeable segment of society from its own language, culture, values, and society (Zachariev 1981, 160).

If the foreign language is the vehicle for modern science and technology, whereas Arabic is good only for "the humanities," the Arab

students' conclusion is inevitable: Arabic is an inferior language and what is written in Arabic must be inferior to what is written in the foreign language (Maʿmouri et al. 1983, 30). A study of 500 sociology students at Oran University, Algeria is worth quoting here. Half of the students investigated studied sociology in Arabic, whereas the other half studied it through the medium of French. The following table summarizes the responses of the two groups of students to some key questions (Maʿmouri et al. 1983, 46):[4]

		Arabic students	French students
1.	Arabic is adequate for our age	80%	47%
2.	Arabicization of higher education is a must	95%	54%
3.	Use only Arabic in daily life	36%	23%
4.	Rarely use Arabic in daily life	17%	36%

Moreover, instruction through a foreign language often results in the students suffering from two interrelated handicaps: a low self-image and unsatisfactory performance "compounded by a low expectation of learning capacity on the part of the student himself, his parents, teachers and administrators" (Saville & Troike quoted in Fox 1974, 12). Ideas like these are not romantic speculations with no roots in reality, but have been supported by empirical field research. The author of one such study conducted at the University of Khartoum in the Sudan came to the conclusion that the main problem which students faced at the university was language, and that "upon being faced with the necessity of achieving success through a foreign language, students applied the well-tried methods of school life: carefully copied texts, rote memorization

and 'spotting'" (Douglas, Forthcoming). Once this is known, we cannot help wondering with the same author:

> Of what value is the enormous body of published material in English if students have not the linguistic competence to make use of it? Of what value are the impressive qualifications and experience of the teaching staff if their lectures and tutorials are incomprehensible to most of their students? To what extent does intellectual contact or international business depend upon the medium of instruction in an educational system? (Ibid.)

Two other studies, one from Jordan and the other from Saudi Arabia , of the effects of Arabicization on university undergraduates, found, among other things, that the use of Arabic as a medium of instruction instead of English reduced the drop-out and failure rates very significantly. In addition, subjects in the Saudi study (a sample of students and staff members from two Saudi universities) expressed their belief that

> The use of English has become a solid barrier against the participation of a large segment of the population in the development process. It has perpetuated elitism and an unequal class structure, and has weakened the link between the population and the center that is in charge of national development (al-Qurashi 1982, 237).

The proponents of Arabicization in the Arab countries, whether individuals or institutions, constitute a majority. But it has been largely an impotent and ineffectual majority which, in most cases, has been the victim of its own short-sightedness and ignorance of even the most basic requirements for successful language planning. The efforts of this majority in the field of Arabicization have been confined for the most part to one of two activities which, although not entirely useless, are far from making Arabicization an actuality:

1. Defending the Arabic language and its glorious past, and asserting in the strongest terms its ability to be a vehicle for science and technology in the modern age.

2. Making modest attempts at suggesting Arabic equivalents for a limited number of technical terms in various fields and compiling glossaries and bilingual dictionaries of such terms.

Because of the impotence of the proponents of Arabicization and the inadequacy of their strategies, they are almost unanimous in their call for a "political solution," i.e., a decree or an order from the highest political authority in each Arab country for universities to Arabicize instruction in all fields. But confidence in the efficacy of such action is misfounded for more than one reason. Firstly, there is the fact that conservatism tends to be innate within establishments. Several Arab countries inherited their present language policy from colonial times. The natural inertia of establishments has kept things the way they were before independence. In fact, there is clear evidence that the position of the two major foreign languages in the Arab region, English and French, has been greatly enhanced after independence. In addition to their omnipresence in all Arab educational systems, English and French have made sweeping gains in the Arab mass media and the Arab system of values. Most Arab countries have English and/or French newspapers, radio stations and/or television channels. Knowledge of French or English has become a prerequisite to social mobility, professional advancement, and psychological security. Secondly, most Arab regimes are by their very nature undemocratic and, therefore, would not do anything to rectify the inequity and injustice caused by the use of a foreign language as a vehicle for education. Because of their very nature, these regimes encourage elitism and are unaware of the dangers of their present language policies. Thirdly, most

Arab leaders are foreign-educated and probably share the beliefs of the opponents of Arabicization. In spite of some public statements in which they exalt Arabic and sing its glory, most Arab leaders' allegiance to their national language is not genuine. The best support for this claim lies in the fact that many of these leaders educate their children from early age in foreign countries where no Arabic is taught at all. Not only would these leaders do nothing to help Arabicization, but some of them stand actively against it as the following quotation from a speech by King Hassan II of Morocco illustrates:

> We must organize our culture and our instruction as seems necessary, and reform what must be reformed, in order to turn it into an instrument capable of shaping our children, who hope thanks to it, to become citizens of their country, and of their continent which does not speak Arabic. We live in a continent which speaks English and French. (quoted in Gallagher 1968, 149).

Similar ideas were expressed in 1979 by the then Tunisian Prime Minister, Al-Hadi Nweira, in an inaugural speech to the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO). The golden rule, he said, which Arab universities must follow is to give utmost attention to foreign languages so that our students and researchers can read science in its original language. Translating into Arabic, he added, is neither enough nor very useful. "Therefore," he concluded, "to save time and effort, and in order to guarantee success, sciences must be taught in the language of science," i.e., in English or French (quoted in Maʿmouri et al. 1983, 73, fnt. 14).

Finally, cases where Arabicization failed, despite its attempted imposition by the political leadership, also demonstrate the futility of the political solution. This happened in Egypt under Nasser when total

Arabicization of Egyptian universities was ordered but, until this moment has not been implemented, in Algeria after independence in the sixties and the seventies, and in Iraq at the beginning of this decade. Arabicization in these, and possibly other, cases failed because the universities themselves did not favor it. Although Arabicization and politics are doubtless interrelated, politics need not be the key to a solution. The constitutions of all Arab countries and the bye-laws of all Arab universities include articles and clauses to the effect that Arabic is the official language of instruction in these universities. If these universities and their staff wanted to Arabicize, they would only be acting in accordance with their legal status as granted to them by their respective governments. The truth of the matter is that most Arab university administrators, like Arab political leaders, are at best tepid in their attitude to Arabicization, and their belief in it rarely goes beyond lip sevice. What Arabicization needs is action on the part of those who believe in it, not reaction, which has characterized most attempts thus far.

What we have called "the futility of the political solution" should not be construed as a denial of any connection between Arabicization and politics. Arabicization <u>is</u>, in fact, primarily a political issue. A brief historical review of the issue will clarify this matter.

Arabic became firmly established as a language of science and other branches of knowledge as early as the first decades of the ninth century A.D. when translation into Arabic from Greek, Persian and Sanskrit reached its zenith under the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun (813-833 A.D.). Sure of themselves and confident of their language, the Arabs of those days had none of the sensitivities and inferiority complexes from which many modern Arabs suffer. Soon, Arabic was to become an international language of science and knowledge and continued in that capacity throughout the

Middle Ages. A series of political and military developments and disasters led eventually to the disintegration of the state and the decline of learning and knowledge. Baghdad was devastated by the Mongols in 1258, Spain was lost forever in 1492 and the Mamluks--the last medieval dynasty of the Arab world who were "on the whole uncultured and blood-thirsty" (Hitti, 1943, 239)--ruled much of the Arab region from 1250 until 1517 when the Ottomans took over and ruled the entire Arab region for the next four centuries--a period which witnessed the total neglect of and, not infrequently, the waging of war against Arabic. Ottoman rule ended with World War I and a new era began, namely, the domination of the Arab region by European powers and the political fragmentation of the Arab countries, from which they have not recovered yet. Thus, the recession of Arabic coincided with the European renaissance.

For more than seven centuries, during which knowledge had been expanding at an increasingly accelerated rate, Arabic remained virtually stagnant and was excluded from use as an instrument in the creation and transmission of new sciences and knowledge .

At about the same time that attempts began to modernize Japanese, a similar but abortive attempt was made for Arabic when the first modern schools of medicine and translation in the Arab countries were founded in Cairo in 1826 and 1835, respectively, by Muhammad Ali, the viceroy of Egypt and the founder of its royal family which survived until 1952. The language of

instruction in the medical school, which is now the Cairo University School of Medicine, was Arabic from the beginning until 1887, when the British, who had occupied Egypt in 1882, ordered Arabic to be replaced by English. The translation school was also closed and not re-opened until Nasser came to power in 1952. Similarly, the American University of Beirut, founded in 1866, began by teaching all subjects, including medicine and pharmacy, in Arabic and continued to do so until the Turks were driven out of the area (Khuri, 1984, 138) when the university switched to English as a medium of instruction.

The latter case illustrates the politics of language use most clearly. Apparently, the Vatican and other European religious institutions in those days used Arabic as a weapon to fight Ottoman influence in the Arab region, and their missionaries in the area were very busy studying and teaching it. They also edited and published a large number of old Arabic manuscripts, opened schools, and generally spread the use of Arabic as a modern language. With the departure of the Turks from the area, the political services of Arabic were automatically rendered useless (Ḍāher, 1978, 83-84).

It is interesting to speculate that, had these attempts at modernizing Arabic not been interrupted, Arabic might today be in a much more favorable position. The sad fact, however, is that the gap between Arabic and modern life has been widening all the time. The longer Arabic remains excluded from education, the more serious the problem will

become. Time will only help complicate matters for Arabic, and the only solution is to put the language immediately to practice in all fields and on all levels. The Syrian experience of teaching medicine through Arabic, which dates back to 1919, and which was later extended to other fields of scientific study, proves that "an Arab country can function using Arabic almost exclusively in all fields of endeavor without running up against insurmountable problems" (Gallagher, 1968, 140).

Technical and Scientific Terminology

In an otherwise insightful and well-written paper, Gallagher (1968, 140) summarizes the problems of modern written Arabic in the following manner:

> Objectively viewed, Arabic faces some grave problems if it is to adapt itself to the efficient transmission of technical information. It is burdened with an inadequate and ossified script which needs overhauling and simplification. The present-day hesitancy of the language (which has not been true at all times in the past) to borrow directly is a sign of weakness. The inability to prefix and suffix easily and to build combining forms is a serious handicap in a world whose vocabulary is being enlarged everyday with compound constructs. But, above all, ... the fundamental question is that of setting up a unified scientific and technological terminology.

In spite of its claim to objectivity, the above inventory of problems can be easily contested. The orthography or morphology of a language can never seriously hinder its development. Arabic still has the same script and derivational morphology it had centuries ago when it was an international

language of science and knowledge. To invoke the example of Japanese yet again, the script and morphology of Arabic are much more "adequate" than those of Japanese, although Japanese is the more developed of the two languages. Gallagher's remarks on Arabic script and morphology should be classified with those accusations that are "based more on casual observations and impressionistic evidence than on empirical research" (Mahmoud, 1979, 131). Again, Gallagher is unfair to Arabic when he talks of its "hesitancy ... to borrow," as this is the fault of the purists, not the language. One has only to look into any spoken dialect of Arabic to realize that Arabic is capable of extensive borrowing when it is left to do so freely. And standard Arabic did not seem to be hesitant to borrow words extensively in the Middle Ages and earlier from Greek and Persian, among other languages.

The last problem cited by Gallagher, namely, the unification of scientific terminology, is real and serious. Variation in the technical terms adopted in different Arab countries is today one of the more serious problems facing Arabicization and the adaptation of Arabic for modern communication needs. One of the major factors behind this problem is the lack of coordination among individual Arab countries and among individuals and agencies within the same country in the fields of Arabicization and terminology work. The problem is so serious that one often finds different Arabic equivalents for the same English or French term in glossaries and dictionaries printed by the same publisher. In fact, this lin-

guistic anarchy is no longer confined to the field of technical terms, but today extends to other non-technical aspects of modern Arabic vocabulary.

Lexical variation is quite extensive in all Arab newspapers, magazines, and other mass media. This is a disturbing realization in view of the fact that, by their very nature, the mass media are the most widely read or heard sources of written Arabic. Textbooks, including Arabic school books, abound with instances of lexical variation. A study of the first-grade Arabic textbooks in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia, and Yemen revealed a long list of lexical items in each book which would not be understood by Jordanian first-graders. Quite a few words in each book were unknown to me (cf. Ibrahim, 1986). This situation has created the need for certain words which are used in one part of the Arab region to be glossed for the benefit of readers in other countries. In a recent article written by a Moroccan professor and published in one of the most respectable Arab journals, the editor found it necessary to explain to his readers that qārra in the Arab countries of North Africa means thābita or dā'ima--'stable, permanent' (Jābirī, 1984, 55). Maʿmouri, et al. find it necessary to gloss a large number of words in their book, but a larger number of variant items remain unglossed. One extreme example of glossing is the provision of four different terms for "school supervisors," viz., muwajjihīn, mufattishīn, murshidīn, and mutafaqqidīn (Maʿmouri, et

al., 1983, 134). Examples of unglossed items in the same book include the following:

munāḍhara--'test' (p. 42);

taḥaṣṣala ʿalā--'achieved, attained' (p. 43);

muwāliya--'following' (p. 63); and

waḍhīf--'job' (p. 126).

The first book in what is to be a series of books for teaching Arabic to speakers of other languages published by ALECSO (the Arab League Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization), contains at least three dozen words which betray a specific regional origin and which would have been replaced by other words had the book been produced in, say, Jordan. These variable items include words for yoghurt, police station, wardrobe, to study, and others (Badawī, et al., 1983). When the word for bus is introduced in the same book, ḥāfila is used as the basic term, with bāṣ given in brackets. Next to the word in the margin is reproduced an Egyptian bus ticket on which the word utubīs is used for 'bus' (Ibid., 189).

Another disturbing example of serious variation in written Arabic comes from the 'Functional Linguistic Corpus' of the Maghrib, i.e., Algeria, Libya, Morocco, and Tunisia. In a study of this list of 4,800 words, Benabdi (1986) has found that 3.5% of the words differ from Modern Standard Arabic words, which automatically renders them incomprehensible in other Arab countries.

Examples of much more serious instances of variation in technical terminology are numerous and countless. In a recent study, one investigator surveyed 33 bilingual Arabic dictionaries and a number of technical glossaries and specialized vocabulary lists--all of which except two were compiled between 1955 and 1975. The aim of the study was to find the extent of agreement among these sources on technical vocabulary. The results were astounding, for he found a total of eleven different Arabic equivalents for mineralogy, 18 for metallurgy and 23 for geology (al-Faḍlī, 1982). In the introduction to his French-Arabic dictionary of linguistics, Mseddi (1984, 72) lists 23 Arabic equivalents for 'linguistics,' all of which are currently in use throughout the Arab countries. If so much variation and disagreement can exist with regard to such relatively simple and general terms, one can imagine what the situation would be like for other more specific and less-known or understood terms (cf. al-Shihābī, 1965, 128 ff.). The seriousness of lexical and terminological variation in Arabic becomes clear in the light of Mitchell's remark that "as far as Arabic is concerned, it is especially in the lexical area that misunderstanding or failure to understand can arise" (Mitchell, 1986).

Apart from variation in terminology work, Arabic suffers from another problem which is the belief that once the needed lists of terms have been compiled, the problems of

using Arabic as a scientific language will be solved automatically. It goes without saying that this is a naive and far from realistic view. Because terminology lists consist of individual words, most of this type of work is carried out in a vacuum. Finding an equivalent for a word in isolation and for the same word when used in an appropriate context (a scientific article or book) are not the same thing and at times are even two different matters. Thus, authors and translators often discover that many of the words suggested by the academies or the dictionary compilers are unusable. The situation would be different if the new terms resulted from translating or writing scientific and technical books.

Work on terminology lists will remain of very limited value and largely ineffectual unless the proposed terms are put to the test immediately as is the case with terms suggested by the Damascus language academy which find their way almost immediately in everyday use in oral and written scientific discourse at the university level where all subjects are taught in Arabic. The implication of this argument is that the Arabicization of education should not wait until the terms needed have been compiled. If anything, the process should be reversed. Arabicization should be implemented as soon as possible since this is the most reasonable process for generating the needed terms. There can also be little doubt that Arabicization will contribute significantly to the standardization of scientific and technical terminology in Arabic. Arabicization will cause Arabic to be extensively

utilized by members of the scientific community, and through this utilization the language will produce and incorporate viable terms, which, for the most part, are bound to be uniform and fit for survival.

Conclusions: Arabicization vs Aribization

Throughout this paper I have deliberately used the term Arabicization to the exclusion of Arabization. Although the two terms are used interchangeably by some, the difference between them is not insignificant. Arabicization refers to and involves the use of the Arabic language in place of some other language. The term Arabization, however, has a much wider application as well as a more profound implication for modern Arab society. Thus, whereas Arabicization is a linguistic process whereby a foreign language is replaced by Arabic, Arabization is linguistic as well as cultural. When Arabicization is discussed, it is usually seen as an isolated problem having little or nothing to do with other problems from which modern Arab societies are suffering. In this concluding section of the paper, I shall briefly explore the connection between Arabization and Arabicization and argue that the latter, if it is to be meaningful, depends heavily on the former.

A number of Arab writers have recently pointed out that the problem of Arabicization cannot and should not be considered in isolation from the wider linguistic, social, and

cultural context prevailing in all Arab countries without exception (cf. e.g., al-Jinḥānī, 1982a and 1982b; Juʿaiṭ, 1982; Shaʾīṭ, 1984). Arabicization, they add, will remain extremely superficial and confined to the verbal level unless due attention is paid to the human element and unless it is part of a more comprehensive cultural ideology which seeks to revolutionize the Arabic language and, with it, contemporary Arab culture and mentality. The real problem of Arabic is not linguistic, but lies in the largely uncreative modern Arab culture (Juʿaiṭ, 1982, 59). A language can develop and mature only to the extent that its users are developed and mature.

Any person who is capable of original ideas and theories in science and thought and of new inventions and discoveries in technology will also be capable of presenting his contributions and naming his inventions in his own language. All attempts at developing Arab societies and modernizing them will have a limited outcome and remain restricted to a small elite unless the tool used in such modernization and development programs is the language of the people. The language of the people is neither English or French nor medieval Arabic, which language academies, Arabic departments in Arab universities, and other conservative forces have been trying unsuccessfully to impose on their societies. Seen in this light, the use of a foreign language and the use of an outmoded and fettered variety of the national language are two sides of the same coin. Both are the distinguishing

marks of a small elitist and privileged class, and both can be and are used, consciously or unconsciously, as effective means by a minority to control and exclude the majority. In this way, Arabization, in the sense of modernizing Arabic in such a way as to make it accessible to the overwhelming majority of Arabs, must go hand-in-hand with Arabicization. Thus, we are in a position to understand why an Arab writer would call for a ban on the teaching of Arabic by Arab universities and academics who are far less advanced in their understanding of the Arabic language than the early Arab grammarians of more than one thousand years ago (al-Yousef, 1978, 40; cf. also Muṣṭafā, 1982, 215). Arabization, however, encompasses more than modernizing Arabic. Among other things, it also means Arabicizing the humanities which, although taught in Arabic in almost all Arab universities, are still foreign in their content, methods, and the problems with which they deal. In sociology, economics, and psychology, to name only three fields, the problems, cases, and models dealt with belong to other societies. In other words, these fields have been Arabicized, but not Arabized.

To conclude on a more optimistic note, let me briefly indicate some encouraging signs of change in the right direction. In the first place, there is every reason to believe that the grip of medieval Arabic is weakening and that a new variety which is much more accessible to the Arab masses is being born (see section II above). Arabicization has also been gaining ground in recent years. The fact that

the Syrian universities have withstood the test is significant. Today, the Syrian example is often invoked as a strong argument in favor of Arabicization. There is hardly any Arab country now in which Arabicization is not making some progress, slow as this may be. In three years' time, Iraq is scheduled to complete the Arabicization of its universities in all fields. The Arabization of the first two years of instruction in the basic sciences at Jordanian universities will be completed soon. The Sudan government has resolved that university education in all fields shall be Arabicized by the year 1988. And Sana'a University has just decided to Arabicize its medical school.

Interest in scientific translation and publishing and the compilation of bilingual technical dictionaries has also been mounting in recent years to the extent that a number of major publishers in the U.K., U.S.A. and U.S.S.R. regularly publish scientific books in Arabic. Arabicization of university instruction is always accompanied by the writing or translation of some books to be used as textbooks. Thus in Jordan, the Arabic Language Academy has recently published more than a dozen volumes in all of the basic sciences and plans to commission the translation of more such books. As a result of the Arabicization of university education in Iraq, the percentage of scientific books published in that country increased from 3.7% in 1979 to 12.3% in 1983. The total number of scientific titles published in Iraq during these five years was 306, of which only 100 were translations.

Mention should also be made of Algeria, which on the eve of its independence in 1962, faced a more difficult situation than any other Arab country with regard to Arabicization. In view of this fact, we consider it no mean achievement for Algeria to have completed the Arabicization of practically all fields of education in non-scientific subjects on the school and university levels.

The problem of diversity in Arabic terminology has for long been the subject of numerous articles and several publications. Recently, a pan-Arab conference, the first of its kind, was convened in Tunis to study the problem and to suggest solutions. Attended by about one hundred participants from most Arab countries, as well as by representatives of a number of Arab League, U.N. and other international organizations, the Conference on Arab Cooperation in Terminology (Tunis, 7-10 July 1986) resolved that an Arab terminology network be created immediately with temporary headquarters in Tunis. If implemented, the proposed network will no doubt be instrumental in coordinating, and consequently helping to standardize,the diverse and disparate terminological projects in the Arab countries.

Despite these efforts, the general feeling is that not enough is being done to speed up the process of Arabicization and bring about Arabi zation. The majority of the Arab states do not seem to be concerned with the issue, and those that do show some concern are not doing enough. With one or two exceptions, the Arab states, individually and collective-

ly, have no comprehensive strategy or plan for the implementation of Arabicization. It would be even more desirable for the Arab countries to adopt a comprehensive language policy. The envisaged policy would address the major language issues in the Arab countries and how to deal with them. because of their immediate relevance to the topic of this paper, the following issues, among others, would be part of the proposed policy:

[1] The old norms of written Arabic must be reconsidered. The new norms must be based on contemporary usage. In general, the present and the future should be heeded much more than the past.

[2] The teaching of Arabic must be improved and modernized in such a way as to achieve universal literacy in the entire Arab region by the year 2000.

[3] Whereas variation in spoken Arabic and in the oral rendition of written Arabic is acceptable and should be tolerated, standardization of written Arabic must be the goal if all Arab countries are to remain one language community, whose members can communicate with each other. The standardization of written Arabic has also become a necessity in view of the international status accorded to Arabic in the last decade or so since internationalism is incompatible with diversity and regionalism.

[4] Each country must set a target date, not to exceed ten

years, when full Arabicization on all levels of education will have been completed.

The implementation of the above policy points would be enough to make Arabic completely adaptable to the needs of modern communication.

Notes

[1]In preparing this revised version of the paper originally presented at the Symposium on Adapting Vernacular Languages to the Demands of Modern Communication (Bad Homburg, 12-15 June 1985), I have benefitted from comments made by H. Abdel -Jawad, J. Calbert, T. Crocker, B. Harris, M. Matthews, and S. Sul iman. Their comments have led to the improvement of the paper substantially. Needless to say, I remain solely responsible for any shortcomings which the paper may still have.

[2]A Jordanian columnist recently called for a summit conference to deal with the problems of the Arabic language. What prompted him to make this facetious suggestion, he says, is the incredibly low standard of Arabic used in the press and other media, as well as that used by well-known writers. Were it not for interventions by editors and proofreaders, he adds, the country would witness some high-level literary scandals (FakhrI Qa^{c}wār in Al-Ra'i (Amman), no. 4934, 15 Dec. 1983, p. 12).

[3]Morocco and Tunisia are exceptions to this statement. In these two countries, French is still the language of instruction in the majority of school subjects.

[4]The study summarized here was made by M. A. Zu^{c}bī and is reported in Ma^{c}mourj et al. 1983, 46. I have not been able to consult the original study.

[5]It must be added, though, that the differences among several of these items are minor. But even if we disregard such minor differences, the number of truly different terms would still exceed a dozen.

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